The Honorable Barney Frank  
Chairman  
Committee on Financial Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  

The Honorable Spencer Bachus  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Financial Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  

Dear Chairman Frank and Ranking Member Bachus:

On behalf of the Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition’s Revitalizing Older Cities Task Force, we would like to demonstrate our support for H.R. 932, the Community Regeneration, Sustainability and Innovation Act of 2009 and respectfully request that your committee address the issue of vacant and abandoned properties that plague older industrial cities across our country as you carry out your agenda this term.

We are grateful for your leadership in addressing the foreclosure crisis and seeking to stabilize the nation’s housing market by establishing the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. However, many of the communities we represent have been struggling with vacant and abandoned properties for decades and an excess of deteriorating housing stock, severely strained municipal tax bases, and a myriad of other problems associated with population losses have been sustained over the past half century. The decline of the manufacturing sector and the loss of population continue to exacerbate these problems and we are seeking new, creative, and more efficient ways of addressing them.

The Community Regeneration Act is designed to help communities deal with these problems in a creative, collaborative and proactive manner. The bill would establish a competitive grant program awarding resources to communities that have presented thoughtful plans as to how they will reuse vacant land. The bill would also establish resources within the federal government to advise local officials in their efforts to effectuate their plans and other challenges associated with their reuse efforts. The funds will assist self-directed communities in taking control of the problem and laying the groundwork for better and more efficient use of resources.

We hope that you will consider conducting a hearing before the end of the term on this matter of concern and include the perspectives of communities struggling to deal with the complex problems that result from widespread vacant and abandoned properties. We appreciate your leadership in tackling the challenges of the fractured housing market and we look forward to working with you on solutions, like those in H.R. 932, which will empower fractured communities toward a more sustainable future.

Sincerely,

Rep. James L. Oberstar, Co-Chair  
NEMW Congressional Coalition  

Rep. Steven C. LaTourette, Co-Chair  
NEMW Congressional Coalition